Cinderella Stories Of Women Leaders: Connecting Leadership Contexts And Competencies

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This paper illustrates central themes of the Cinderella fairy tale in the leadership of three contemporary women leaders, Ruth Simmons, Mary Kay, and Oprah Winfrey, who exercise their leadership in three different contexts, academia, business and the media, respectively. It then describes the leadership of these women in terms of specific competencies, which the three contemporary women leaders share and that are their defining leadership attributes. Cinderella themes, context and leadership competencies are linked in a conceptual model that treats these as antecedents of leadership effectiveness.

For hundreds of years, stories and fairy tales have played an important role in Western and Eastern cultures. Stories are harbingers of challenges and crises that call for our attention. They are conveyors of problems that beg solutions; they are vehicles for gaining insights into relationships, making decisions, implementing policies, and overcoming problems of morale and injustice. Stories and fairy tales provide a moral compass for what is right and wrong and serve as a barometer for change.

Most of us are familiar with the Cinderella fairy tale. It is the story of a beautiful girl of humble upbringing, a powerless father, wicked stepmother, her daughters and their anxious jealousies who subject the heroine to one ordeal of domestic drudgery after another to prevent her from going to a ball where the prince is looking for his bride. Each night, Cinderella dances the night away with the prince but flees before he could make her acquaintance. On the third night, the prince had the staircase coated with black pitch and Cinderella, in her nightly flight, loses one of her slippers, which the prince uses to locate his mystery bride. Despite radical measures such as cutting off toes and heels attempted by the stepsisters to prove that the lost slipper belonged to one of them, they could not pass the test. The prince found his beloved and they lived heavily thereafter.

While the Brothers Grimm's version is the most popular one, the fairy tale is told around the world, focusing on the unbearable family situation produced by the father's remarriage and persecution of the heroine by an evil stepmother. Cinderella stories from many cultures identify these themes and often re-write the fairy tale to reflect culture specific values. Sometimes, Cinderella is kind and compassionate as in the Brothers Grimm's version; at other times, she is cruel and vindictive as in some cross-cultural renditions of the fairy tale. For example, an Indonesian Cinderella forces her stepsister into a cauldron of boiling water, then has her body cut up, pickled and sent to the girl's mother as "salt meat" for the next meal. A Filipino variant shows the stepmother and her daughters "pulled to pieces by wild horses". And a Japanese stepsister is dragged around in a basket, tumbles over the edge, and falls to her death (Philip, 1989). Despite the elasticity of the Cinderella character within a given culture, the fairy tales' central themes focus on universal issues such perseverance in the face of obstacles, dignity and self-determination

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Second-Biannual Storytelling Conference of the Americas, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, August 30-September 2, 2001.

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There has been a growing interest in the leadership, management and organizational behavior literature in storytelling, both as a qualitative methodology and a vehicle for organizational change and transformation. Storytelling is a powerful tool that gives us access to the living part of an organization. Stories can be used to rally leaders and followers around a specific social, political or cultural issue or cause. They can be placed in the service of change efforts that will initially be seen difficult, even impossible, upsetting and strange. Storytelling allows the best of what we are to come together – reason and intuition, emotion and intellect, empathy and understanding.

Denning (2001) coined the term springboard story to refer to narratives that enable a leap in understanding by the audience so as to grasp how an event, organization, community or complex system may change. A springboard story has an impact not so much through transferring large amounts of information but by catalyzing information into action congruent with the personal experience of members of the audience. The teller of a springboard story tells her tale in such a way as to allow some mental space for the listeners/readers to forge their own thoughts, with the explicit objective of having them invent analogous stories of their own, in parallel to the storyteller's explicit story.

Organizational Stories and Corporate Narratives

Organizational stories are a medium for communicating an organization's central myths to insiders and outsiders and infuse them into everyday decisions, policies and practices (Bolman & Deal, 1991). For example, Nike's co-founder, Coach Broverman, after deciding that his team needed better running shoes, went to his workshop and poured rubber into the family's waffle iron and that is how Nike's famous "waffle" sole was born. It is a story about innovation, courage and out-of-the-box thinking. It is part of the story of Nike's heritage and the first item on the agenda of the company's orientation program for Elkins (Nike spelled backwards, meaning new hires). Like all great stories, Nike stories offer archetypes such as commitment, trust and innovation.

Stories emphasize the non-linear, irrational aspects of organizational life, the part often not considered by scientists or organizational scholars. Management textbooks rarely talk about organizations as complex, fuzzy, irregular, asymmetrical, random systems, which are in continuous disequilibrium and chaos. In the intellectual tradition of logical positivism, which dominates management and leadership theory and research, these are all seen as bad things. The good things in organizational life are clear, simple, clean, orderly, and neat. Yet intuitively we know that the world is not quite this way. Our world is full of complex adaptive systems. Anywhere we look – people, organizations, economies, politics – anything of value is a complex adaptive system.

The purpose of this paper is to apply the central themes embedded in the Cinderella story to three contemporary women leaders who overcame adversity, poverty, and illness in the pursuit of their visions and goals. Like Cinderella, the women leaders discussed here were mistreated in their youth by members of their families, ridiculed, exposed to scrutiny and painful experiences but live happily thereafter. The paper treats the experiences of Ruth Simmons, Mary Kay, and Oprah Winfrey as springboard stories, - inspiring, eye-opening, and gripping, and springboards to new possibilities – and invites the reader to tell their own stories of the three contemporary women leaders in the context of the conceptual framework suggested in Figure 1.

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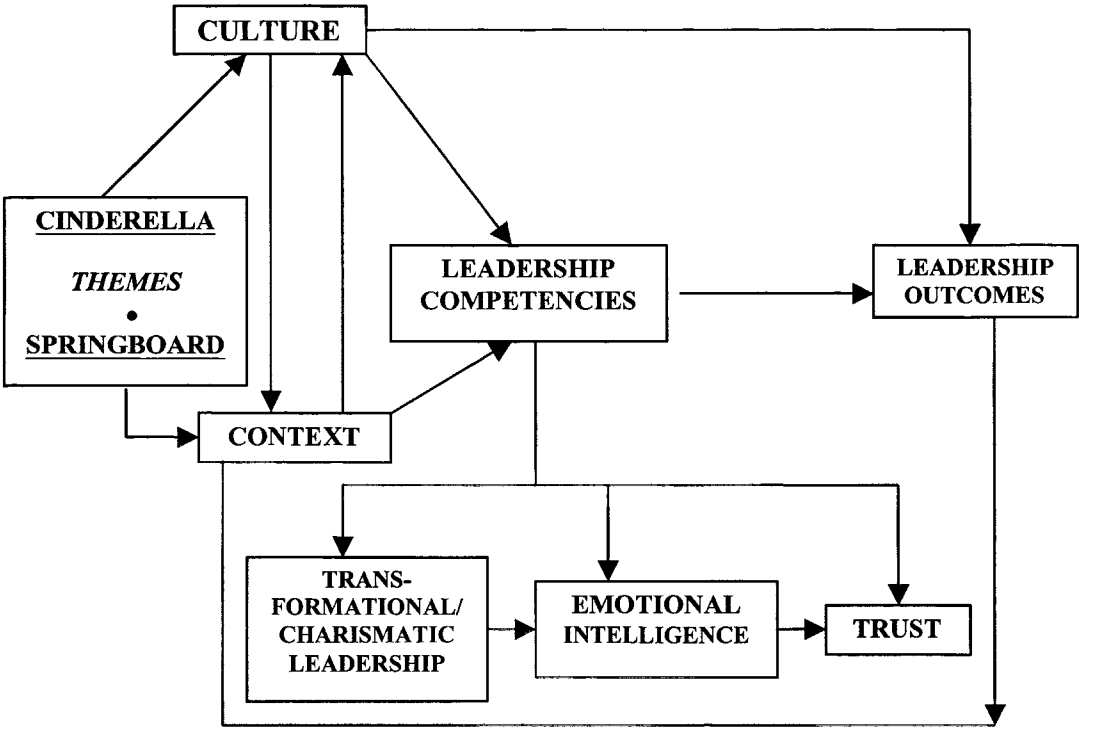
Conceptual Model Linking Cinderella Themes to Leadership Outcomes Through Leadership Attributes



RUTH SIMMONS: A BEACON OF HOPE

Ruth Simmons' Cinderella Story

Simmons was born in rural Texas, the youngest of 12 children of Isaac and Fannie Stubblefield. She moved with her family to Houston when she was seven. Her father was a tenant farmer who raised cotton. Later on, in Houston, he worked in a factory and as a pastor of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church; her mother worked as a domestic and took in ironing while tending to her children. Poverty in extremis, the family barely eked out a living. Simmons told *People Magazine* that while her sisters and brothers were picking cotton all day she was too young to do so and kept her head in books. In such a large family, Simmons says, "I had to fight hard to be heard, so that's why I talk so much and why I'm so assertive now. I was quite an annoyance to everybody."

Her parents' stories about "what mattered in one's life," Simmons told Massie Ritsch for the Daily Princetonian (April 5, 1995), taught her that "decency and concern for other people" were of paramount importance. From her mother she also learned that whatever you do, "even if it is scrubbing floors in other people's houses, (as her mother did), do it well, and do it thoroughly." Simmons' mother influenced her because she was a strong person who taught her to work hard at everything she tried. Her teachers were also very important; they helped her believe in herself. An extremely talkative child who was an independent thinker, Simmons refused to abide her parents' warnings that, outside of their home, she should be "obsequious" and "stay in the background". As a youngster, she realized only dimly, if at all, that in the segregated milieu in which she was raised, most blacks and whites assumed that only white people could ever hope to get a college education, gain membership in the middle class, or even attend a theatrical performance. "The fact that there was definitely a really low ceiling for me did not enter my mind," she told Massie Ritsch.

At Grapeland's all-black elementary school, Simmons intelligence and natural interest in learning brought her to the attention of Ida Mae Henderson, her kindergarten teacher, who encouraged and nurtured her in the

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conviction that with help, she would eventually make a difference in the world. Indeed, well before entering high school, Simmons became gripped by the desire not only to make a difference but also to "achieve something spectacular". Simmons credits a kindergarten teacher for encouraging her to overcome obstacles. "What made the difference with her, " Simmons said, "was, never in her instructions to us, never in her vision for us, did she say, "You can do this, but you cannot do that."

Having grown up in a large family, the home in which she was raised, and the variety of experiences she was exposed to, make it easy for her to understand the needs of other people. As a result, Simmons grew up with an enduring respect for the dignity of work. "Any work done out of love for one's family and out of obligation and duty is noble work", she says. "The fact that you have a lawyer's or a doctor's degree means that you can do work that is satisfying to you, but it's not more valuable work. All the work that is done to make society function is valuable work."

Ruth Simmons earned her bachelor's degree from Dillard University in New Orleans, where she graduated summa cum laude in 1967. Upon graduation from Dillard, Simmons won a Fulbright and studied in France for a year. She completed her doctorate in romance languages at Harvard University in 1973. Her administrative career began at Princeton University as Acting Director of the Afro-American Studies program and as Associate Dean of the Faculty. At Princeton, she was widely credited with revitalizing the university's African-American studies program, attracting to Princeton such noted scholars as Toni Morrison and Cornel West. She also served as a Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Southern California, before moving on to Spelman College to become Provost there. Among the faculty and staff of the universities she was affiliated with, she was regarded as a first rate scholar and a wise, knowledgeable, and fair administrator.

Ruth Simmons continued to make history when she became President of Smith College in 1995. She was hailed as the first black president of one of the most selective women's colleges called the Seven Sisters. Smith College had a reputation as one of the more conservative of the Seven Sisters schools; its graduates include Nancy Regan and Barbara Bush. Educators called Simmons' appointment heroic and Smith students cheered.. While at Smith, Simmons gained national attention for establishing the first engineering program at the women's college and instituting a curriculum wide focus on public speaking. She provided a paid internship for every undergraduate intern. During her tenure at Smith, the school's endowment nearly doubled to $900 million.

Last year, Ruth Simmons made history again when she was named President of Brown University and became the first African-American to head an Ivy League School. On July 2001, she began her duties as the first female president of Brown University, the first black president of an Ivy League institution and the first black woman to lead a national research university. The appointment represents a breakthrough in terms of the recognition of people for their ability, "says Shirley Ann Jackson, president of Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y. "Because of Brown's position," she says, "it takes on added significance and hopefully leads to broader thinking, not just higher education, but across all sectors of American life."

Throughout the academic world, Simmons's appointment has generated enthusiasm bordering on the ecstatic. It is a very significant milestone in a much longer journey, " says Stanley Ikenberry, president of the American Council on Education, noting that now about 20% of college presidents are women, twice as many as a decade ago. "But the real message is that Ruth Simmons is a very sophisticated academic who has had a remarkable background, and so she is a seasoned academic and administrator. Simmons is also a passionate educator and an outspoken advocate for diversity in higher education, a topic that "will continue to be a higher intensity issue in the next ten years at it has been in the last 10 years, " Ikenberry says.

It is a new moment, a new age, a new era, and Simmons is the personification of that. She represents opportunity for women, opportunity for minorities, and opportunities for people born of humble experience. The message embedded in her leadership is that you can transcend these in the new millennium. According to Simmons, it is this particular time in history when these

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kinds of barriers are prone to come down. Through her own hard times, she came to realize her strengths. "I had pivotal experiences that helped me understand, epiphanies if you will, throughout my education," she says. They were "moments when I had to struggle, and by struggling, I came to understand what I could do."

MARY KAY: A TRAILBLAZER FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Mary Kay Ash's Cinderella Story

Mary Kay Ash, was founder and chairwoman emeritus of Mary Kay Cosmetics. Once-divorced, twice widowed, Mary Kay was twice-born. From the age of seven, she kept house in Hot Wells, TX and cooked and cared for her father who was bedridden with tuberculosis. After her first husband left her for another woman, she dropped out of premed courses she was taking at the University of Houston and began selling full-time to support her children. Her second husband, an executive in the vitamin industry, collapsed with a heart attack a month before she launched her own company. According to Mary Kay, he just fell into his plate, his face turned purple. Her third husband, Mel Ash, a retiring manufacturing representative, died in 1980 after 14 years of marriage. Before Mary Kay started her business with $5,000, she worked for 25 years in a male corporate world. Underpaid and repeatedly passed over for promotions, nothing made her angrier than training a man only to see him become her superior. She gambled her $5,000 life savings to launch Mary Kay Cosmetics from a 500-foot square foot Dallas storefront, a gamble that paid off big time.

Mary Kay Ash is what Harvard psychologist William James (1902) called twice born. She, according to Zaleznik (1977) who commented on the twice born concept, "grew through mastering painful conflict during the developmental years. Leaders are twice born individuals who endure major events and crises that lead to a sense of separateness and estrangement from their environment". In Mary Kay Ash's case the twice born encounters came from her childhood and significant relationships with people close to her. Instead of being traumatized by these experiences, never to recover, Mary Kay mastered her personal tragedies.

Mary Kay had a vision based on the emerging needs of women in the 1960s and 1970s which offered women an appealing career as beauty consultants, not salespeople, they could pursue in their homes. Today, Mary Kay beauty consultants are found all over the world. Recently, Mary Kay discovered that Russia is a fertile market since women there have limited career opportunities. Mary Kay Russia now has over 5,000 independent beauty consultants, many of whom are highly educated women such as former lawyers, doctors, and teachers who earn $300-400 a month, about three or four times the average salary they made in their former professions. Worldwide, the company prides itself in having more women earning more than $50,000 per year than any other organization. A complimentary pink Cadillac for high performing consultants serves as a trademark, sales incentive, and status symbol.

One of the important leadership tasks Mary Kay took very seriously was building, transmitting, and nurturing corporate culture, which is manifested in the ubiquitous use of the color pink. The organizational culture is obvious at corporate headquarters in Dallas, the annual sales convention and the stories about the company that circulate among new recruits. The first floor of corporate headquarters is a shrine dedicated to Mary Kay. Also on display at Mary Kay headquarters are larger than life photographs of the company's sales directors, which, according to Kotter (1990), say more about corporate strategy than many firms are able to say in their annual reports.

Similarly, the annual sales meetings in Dallas, to which thousands of beauty consultants flock every year, make a powerful statement about corporate culture. Correspondent Kristine McMurran (1985) captured the spirit of the convention when she described the beauty consultants as assembled in

> "full plumage with brows arched, false eyelashes aflutter, and cheeks abloom. En masse they bristle with enough flawlessly polished, razor sharp fingernails to puncture a Goodyear blimp and tear it to tatters" (p. 58).

At these meetings, Mary Kay Ash promoted the vision and mission of her company

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and motivated her sales force. Top saleswomen are lavishly praised and rewarded with diamond baubles, mink coats, and pink Cadillac's. And Mary Kay stood out as a "sort of Moses leading her chosen people to a promised land brimming with personal pride and her trademark pink Cadillacs" (McMurran, 1985, p. 58).

The culture of Mary Kay is also transmitted through stories about the company, which are routed and shared among the beauty consultants and headquarter staff. At Mary Kay, successful beauty consultants are rewarded with a twelve-carat pin shaped like a bumblebee. The story that goes with the bumblebee is that the bee has a body that is too large for its wings and therefore should not be able to fly. But it does. And so it is with women. They were not expected to succeed in the workforce, but have done so. Mary Kay was committed to selling women on themselves. She had strong ideas about women's roles in the workforce and has gained a national reputation as a forceful supporter of women's rights.

The culture of Mary Kay Cosmetics rests on commitment to customer satisfaction, a pillar built through quality, value, convenience, innovations and personal service (Ash, 1981). It is transmitted through company symbols, motivational seminars, pep talks at Mary Kay's home, birthday cards for each consultant, diamond studded bumblebees, generous incentives, and an organizational structure that promotes individual achievement, economic independence for women, and treats the company as an extension of the family. The company's leitmotif, another visible symbol of a strong organizational culture, is the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Not only is this rule taken seriously in company decisions, but it also was the way Mary Kay motivated and led. She led by example. The statement, "the speed of the leader is the speed of the gang", was often heard at directors' meetings.

OPRAH WINFREY: MEDIA MOGUL AND PERSONAL COACH

Oprah Winfrey's Cinderella Story

Born to unwed teenage parents in Kosciusko in rural Mississippi, Oprah spent her early years in poverty on a farm in extreme poverty with her Bible-thumping grandmother. She moved in with her mother in Milwaukee as a preteen when she was 12. A 13-year old cousin raped her and she gave birth to a baby which was born prematurely and died when Oprah was 14. As a youngster, she was constantly in trouble. Once Oprah said, "the fact that someone as poor as I, as black as I am, from the South, from rape, from confusion, could move to hope, to possibility, to victory is amazing to me."

Moving to Nashville to live with her father, Vernon Winfrey, turned her life around. With strict rules and the structure of a good value system, Oprah landed her first job as a radio station reporter while still in high school. She enrolled in Tennessee State University and switched to television broadcasting at age 19, anchoring the news at Nashville's WTVF-TV. One of the first black women in college as well as in varsity, Oprah was edging her way into a white man's, appearance-obsessed world and became the youngest person and first Afro-American woman to anchor the news at Nashville's WTVF-TV.

In 1984 Oprah moved to Chicago to host "AM Chicago", facing the national talk show hosted by Phil Donahue as her competition. Donahue's shows were focused on providing viewers with lots of information; however, the discussions were rarely personalized. Oprah's style, on the other hand, was different. Utilizing what Deborah Tannen (1995) terms 'rapport talk' – that back and forth talk that Tannen believes is the basis for female friendships – Oprah shares her heart, passions, and secrets. Said Winfrey in a 1996 interview, "the difference between Donahue and me is me. He's more intellectual in his approach. I appeal to the heart and relate personally to my audience". In less than a year, the show was expanded to an hour and renamed " The Oprah Winfrey Show". Not a bad career path for someone who entered this world with almost every major obstacle stacked against her.

In 1994, eight years into her successful show, Oprah took a bold step that could have seriously threatened her ratings. In an era when talk shows were fiercely competing to present the most controversial topics with people revealing the most intimate, often disgusting details of their lives on national TV, Oprah decided to leave sensationalism to others. She explicitly rejected 'tabloid television' and

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became one of America's most well-known and effective advocates of a host of social and educational causes. She pledged to use her show to discuss and focus on meaningful subjects that touch the lives of all of her viewers. In 1996, Oprah began *Oprah's Book Club*, an on-air reading club designed to get the country excited about reading. Each of the books selected for Oprah's Book Club has become an instant bestseller.

Oprah's financial savvy is amazing. She established Harpo Productions in 1988, built a huge production facility in downtown Chicago and bought her show, "The Oprah Winfrey Show" outright from Capital Cities/ABC. She is involved in Oxygen Cable Network, served as both star and executive producer for the feature film "Beloved" and launched her own magazine, "O, the Oprah Magazine", a monthly circular that is a personal growth guide for the new century. Oprah's magazine is credited as being the most successful magazine launch in recent history. The magazine is another medium through which Oprah can connect with her viewers and provide possibilities for transforming their lives.

In 1997, she formed *Oprah's Angel Network*, a campaign to encourage viewers to make the world a better place. In announcing this initiative, Oprah said, "I want you to open your hearts and see the world in a different way. I promise this will change your life for the better." *Oprah's Angel Network* has collected over 3.5 million dollars to create scholarships and has funded nearly 200 Habitat for Humanity homes. The Network now gives $100,000 every Monday on the Oprah Winfrey Show to people who are using their lives to improve the lives of others.

Oprah did not believe that being poor, black, overweight and female in Mississippi was holding her back to pursue her dreams. She has become one of the most powerful people on television, a super celebrity who translated her success into a thriving business empire, while maintaining a persona that makes people feel she is their own best friend. Being black is part of who she is, but it is her spirit that defines her total being. Oprah shares her fortune of millions with numerous charities and friends. The largest recipients are educational institutions, including her alma mater, Tennessee State University, and her own "Family for Better Lives Foundation". She is a children's rights activist, and stood beside President Clinton when he signed into law a 1994 bill to create a national database of convicted child abusers, which Oprah had proposed. Oprah Winfrey has already left an indelible mark on the face of television. Her legacy has established her as one of the most important figures in popular culture. In January 2001 she was dubbed *Newsweek's* "Woman of the Century."

LEADERSHIP IN CONTEXT

The three women leaders presented here exercise leadership in significantly different contexts: academia, corporate and the media. Context, in the most general sense, refers to the setting in which leadership emerges and is practiced. Klenke (1996) set forth the premise that leadership is largely determined and shaped by the parameters and dynamics context. It is the contextual superstructure in which leadership is enacted and in which specific leadership perspectives evolve. Therefore, examining women's' leadership from a contextual perspective means isolating the salient features of three contexts in which we find Simmons, Kay, and Winfrey.

Ruth Simmons's world is the world of academia and education where intellectual leadership, academic freedom, and collegiality are some of the hallmarks of this context. Mary Kay Ash led in an entrepreneurial environment where business acumen, innovation and concern for the customers make all the difference. Prior to founding her own company, Mary Kay worked for many years in a formal organization, a context that at the time was openly hostile to women. At the time, the business world reverberated with the great male saga of conquests (new markets, new products) and sports metaphors such as "play hard", "crunch the enemy", and "don't show your trump card".

The media, which provide the context for Oprah Winfrey's leadership, is a setting, which has romanticized leadership successes and failures. The romanticized conception of leadership suggests that leaders do or should have the ability to control and influence the fates of the organizations in their charge. Ultimately, this assumption of control and responsibility

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engenders a double-edged sword: not only does it imply giving leaders credit for positive organizational outcomes, but it also entails laying blame for negative ones. The romance of leadership (Meindl, Ehrlich, and Dukerich 1985), pervasive in Western cultures, suggests that people believe that individual leaders are directly responsible for organizational outcomes. Chen and Meindl (1991) suggested that the media develop "constructions of leadership regularly and widely for our consumption . . These images feed and expand our appetites for leadership products, appealing not only to our collective commitments to the concept but fixating us in particular on the personas and characteristics of the leaders themselves (p. 522)." Meindl, Ehrlich, and Dukerich (1985) concluded that the social construction of organizational realities has elevated the concept of leadership to a lofty status and level of significance. The imagery, mythology and stories associated with the concept are evidence of the mystery and near mysticism with which leadership has been imbued (p. 78).

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES: LINKING PINS BTEWEEN CONTEXTS AND OUTCOMES

Beyond differences in context, Simmons, Kay, and Winfrey exemplify three attributes that play a focal role in current leadership research: transforming/transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and the ability to build trust.

Transforming/Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a popular and widely researched topic in the contemporary leadership literature. However, foundation principles of transformational leadership appear in the work of Max Weber (1923/63) on charismatic leadership and Burns (1978) who was the first to specify the distinction between transactional leaders who attempt to satisfy current needs of followers by focusing attention on exchanges and transforming leaders who attempt to elevate the needs of followers and promote dramatic change in individuals, groups, and organizations. Instead of, or in addition to, catering to the self-interests of their followers by making and keeping promises of rewards for compliance or threatening them for noncompliance, transforming leaders move their followers to transcend their self-interests for the sake of the common good. These leaders, according to Burns, contribute to the motivational maturity and moral development of their followers. Ultimately, transforming leadership is a moral exercise that is intended to raise the standard of human conduct.

Bass (1995) built on the work of Burns when he proposed that the transformational leader articulates a realistic vision of the future that can be shared, stimulates subordinates intellectually, is likely to become charismatic in the eyes of their followers. Followers want to identify with leaders and their visions; they view transformational leaders in an idealized manner, often describing them as innovators, visionaries, and exemplars. Followers of transformational leaders also develop strong feelings for and about their leaders because of the leader's ability to transform them as they accept and internalize the key values and beliefs that the leader has identified in her vision. This, in turn, allows followers to become more capable of enacting their own visions. Recent research has shown that charisma is an important component of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) and that charismatic, transformational, and visionary leaders create lasting impacts on their organizations.

Ruth Simmons, Mary Kay Ash and Oprah Winfrey, are women leaders who possess the elusive quality know as charisma. . According to Weber, charisma includes any authority that derives its legitimacy not from rules, positions or traditions, but from a "devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, or the normative patters or order revealed or ordained by him (Eisenstadt, 1968, p. 46). The three women leaders singled out here illustrate several specific charismatic attributes such as a transcendent vision and/or ideology, the ability to inspire and build confidence, rhetorical ability and a "powerful aura." Their visions are inspirational, optimistic, and future oriented and they articulate a sense of purpose that attracts, motivates and energizes followers to take on difficult challenges.

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Our three contemporary leaders establish close relationships and connections with their followers, be they faculty, students and administrators as in the case of Ruth Simmons, female cosmetics consumers as in the case of Mary Kay, or TV audiences around the world as in the case of Oprah. They also stand out from other kinds of leaders because of the extraordinary effects they have on their followers. They communicate values (Simmons: equality in education; Mary Kay: equality in the workforce, and Oprah: personal and spiritual growth) that have ideological consequences for their followers and transform their needs and values from self-interests to collective interests.

Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence gained popularity with the publication of Goleman's (1995) book entitled *Emotional intelligence*. It has been defined by Copper and Sawat (1997) as follows:

> "emotional intelligence is the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connections, and influence".

Reduced to its simplest description, emotional intelligence (EI) can be defined as a group of mental activities that help people recognize their own feelings and those of others. EI refers to an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence a person's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures. It is also known as "street smarts".

The hallmarks of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and optimism in the face of failure, openness to and effectiveness in leading change, trustworthiness and comfort with ambiguity. Models of emotional intelligence are emerging as an influential framework in the study of leadership. One reason for this penetration is that the concept of emotional intelligence offers a language and framework capable of integrating a wide range of research findings in leadership studies. Studies suggest that emotional intelligence (and related aspects of practical-creative intelligence), not IQ or raw brainpower alone, provide the underpinnings for many of the best decisions effective leaders make and the successful performance of dynamic organizations. Moreover, Goleman (1995) suggested that emotionally intelligent managers may be more successful in developing employees, dealing with diversity, and coordinating group efforts than managers who lack this quality.

The relative significance of emotional competencies compared to cognitive abilities has been born out in Boyatzis's classic 1982 study of more than two thousand supervisors, middle managers and executives of twelve organizations, which found that all but two of the 16 abilities setting the stars apart from the average performers were emotional competencies. Similarly, research by the Center for Creative Leadership found that the primary causes of derailment in executives involve deficits in emotional competence. The three primary deficits were difficulty in handling change, not being able to work well in a team, and poor interpersonal relations. No wonder then that emotional intelligence is finding its way into companies, offering employees a way to come to terms with their feelings and to perform better. For example, a few years ago, American Express implemented a program when faced with an apparently insolvable problem – more than two-thirds of American Express clients were declining to buy life insurance, even though their financial profiles suggested a need for it. As it turned out the problem was not the product, it was emotional. Clients reported all kinds of emotional issues involved in buying life insurance – fear, suspicion, (Schwartz, 2000). To help their financial advisors deal with these emotions, American Express implemented a training program that used techniques to make their salespeople more aware of their emotions and gave them tools to change negative emotions into positive ones. Advisors, in short, became more emotionally competent. Research on emotionally intelligent leadership suggests that it is a key to creating a working climate that nurtures employees and encourages them to give their best, which, in turn, pays off in terms of improved business performance. Research has also shown that emotional intelligence not only distinguishes outstanding leaders but can also be linked to strong performance as shown by the three women leaders profiled here.

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Emotionally intelligent leaders like Simmons, Kay, and Winfred demonstrate their ability to motivate themselves, persist in the face of frustration and make lasting commitments to the common good. They are driven to perform beyond expectations and are motivated by a deeply embedded desire to achieve. Achievement motivation in these women combines with self-regulation that helps them overcome frustrations and setbacks. In Simmons, Kay, and Winfrey we also see the integration of emotions and intellect. As exemplary leaders in their respective contexts, these three women integrate emotional realities into their perceptions of the contexts in which they lead and inject meaning and purpose into their business strategies. As emotionally intelligent leaders, they effectively manage their relationships with others and build bonds and teams as the basis of their collaborative work. They create an atmosphere of openness in the organizations they lead, deal with difficult issues straightforward, listen well and share information fully. On numerous occasions, Simmons, Kay, and Oprah have shown their outstanding conflict management and negotiation skills as they build symbiotic relationships between their multiple constituencies.

Building Trust

Few aspects of a relationship are more important than trust. Without trust, you cannot lead. Without trust, people become self-protective and controlling. Likewise, when trust is low between leaders and followers, people are likely to distort, ignore and disguise facts, ideas and feelings. A trusting relationship between leaders and their constituencies is essential in order to accomplish extraordinary things. Therefore, it is not surprising that trust has become a central competitive issue. Says management guru Tom Peters, "technique and technology are important, but adding trust is the issue of the decade." Without trust, innovation falters and vanishes. According to Manfred Kets de Vries, professor at INSEAD, "if there is no sense of trust in an organization, if people are preoccupied with protecting their backs . . . creativity will be one of the first casualties (Cooper, 1997).

In contemporary organizations, trust is often equated with social capital and is becoming an increasingly critical and visible predictor of success. A recent nationwide survey by the *New York Times* indicated that a large number of American workers feel that trust and loyalty within their firms are decreasing while internal competition among coworkers is increasing. Growing evidence confirms that trust is a vital resource, a form of "collaborative capital" that can be used to great advantage. Trust, according to Bennis and Nanus (1997), is the force that keeps leadership rolling because it implies accountability, predictability, and reliability.

As historian Francis Fukuyama has pointed out, the freewheeling, ad hoc organizations of the new economy can exist only if their members are willing to trust each other. Trustworthiness is built and sustained on a foundation of honest and appropriate disclosure, believability, and credibility. Leaders and managers appreciate the value of trust and the cost of mutual suspicion or mistrust. Trust is a time-honored social engagement, which is a defined and shaped, in social circumstances and cultural context.

After a decade of chaos and fear which resulted in massive layoff, mergers and acquisitions, major structural changes in organizations, broken covenants, lost loyalty, and distrust, the American workplace is establishing trust as an imperative to create work environments that are governed by honesty and mutual respect instead of power and fear. Some of America's most successful companies including Southwest Airlines, Nordstrom, and Wal-Mart are now building their market strength and profitability on a foundation of trust, integrity and credibility. As Simmons, Kay, and Oprah illustrate again and again, trust, honesty, and integrity are something no single person owns but are shared by people. They are not what leaders give to their collaborators but what people must exemplify and practice together.

Our three women leaders, in their respective contexts, have built trust among their constituencies through caring, competence, and commitment by establishing trustworthy relationships with students and faculty, consumers, and TV audiences. Their trust comes from character and integrity and their

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willingness to accept accountability for their personal and public lives. For them, the issues are not blame or fault when it comes to social/societal problem, but about learning, improvement and growth. For Simmons, Kay, and Oprah, there are no shades of gray when honesty and morality are at stake and integrity are not an option. Their leadership shows that trust is emerging as a complex construct with multidimensional causal conditions that deserve attention in future research. Causal conditions that require consideration include competence, consistency, discretion, loyalty, honesty, and integrity (Butler, 1991; Ross & LaCroix, 1996). Research is needed to investigate the dynamics of these antecedents of trust in leadership situations and to explore how they contribute to leadership outcomes such as effectiveness, follower performance and satisfaction.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The fairy tale of Cinderella served as the springboard to provide a bridge between the central themes of the story and the experiences of three contemporary women leaders, Ruth Simmons, Mary Kay and Oprah Winfrey who bring significant, personal, cognitive and emotional competencies to their leadership. Like many successful leaders, these women have a strong set of core values, a relentless drive for progress, and a remarkable ability to communicate their visions. They are charismatic personalities who also possess the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of information, energy, trust, creativity and influence. The three female leaders display enthusiasm and optimism and form bonds among their respective communities of followers and motivate them into collective action. As charismatic leaders, they hold strong emotional convictions regarding their values and beliefs and have displayed confidence, determination and persistence in the face of adversity, as the heroine in the Cinderella fairy tale did.

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